

Paper Roses on Stony Mountain

by Diana Stevan

Book Club Discussion

1. Dunya (Dolly) tells her mother she thought it was a sign from God that she saw Peter outside the jewellery store window. She also believes he was the one she dreamt about on the eve of St. Andrew's Day, another sign he was meant for her. What do you make of these superstitions? Have they guided your life, and what are your thoughts on how prevalent superstitions are in many cultures?
2. Dolly's family is coming out of the Great Depression, where they've struggled financially to make a go of it. Is Lukia being unreasonable in her complaints about Peter's poor job prospects? Isn't love what matters most?
3. Mike's drinking problems affected the family. Having a glass of vodka (horilka) or whiskey with dinner is a common practice in the Ukrainian culture. Though getting drunk is frowned upon, alcoholism was not considered an illness back then. What are your thoughts on how the family dealt with Mike's excessive drinking?
4. Peter's sister, Mary, was ostracized by her community after she became pregnant as a teen. In the 1940s, even into the 1950s, a woman who had a child out of wedlock was often punished by her family. When Dolly chooses her bridesmaids and overlooks Mary, she causes problems for Peter and his family. Society has changed dramatically since then. Discuss. Though women today can raise a child without a husband, is there still a stigma or has it been completely erased? Do other cultures feel the same way?
5. Women in the 1930s and 1940s did not have the kind of sex education they have today. Many were ill-prepared for marriage and their right to sexual satisfaction. Dolly's

wedding night is not what she had hoped for. Today, with more openness, are women's needs for sexual equality in the bedroom as well as outside the bedroom dealt with in a healthier manner? Or is this a subject that is still difficult to discuss for many?

6. When Peter and Dolly go to Winnipeg to see the royals, it's a glorious event with much pomp and circumstance. King George VI and Queen Elizabeth receive the full celebrity treatment. What is it about people in the public eye that warrants that kind of attention? Is the homage paid to the royals different from our adulation of movie stars, top athletes, and singers? And should it be, and why?
7. Peter's brothers sign up to fight in World War II. Because of his poor education, Peter doesn't qualify. When a country is at war, how do you look upon those who choose to serve by joining the armed forces and those who don't? Do you have knowledge of those in your family tree who served in WWII and how was that viewed by other family members and/or friends?
8. During the war, Winnipeg held a mock Nazi invasion in order to impress upon the population the horrors of what was happening overseas. In this way, they hoped to raise funds for the war effort. It was a terrifying experience for many who didn't know such an event was going to take place. What are your thoughts on this kind of ploy by the civic government of that time? Was the deception warranted?
9. Jealousy has hurt many domestic relationships. How natural do you think this emotion is and what are your thoughts on how it can be kept under control? If you have a jealous partner, what are the ways to reassure them? And at what point does jealousy become too much to bear?
10. Lukia is asked to move in with her daughter and son-in-law to take care of her grandchild. It was not unusual in those days for multi-generations to live together. Today, the elderly, when they require some help, are more often found in assisted living or long-term care homes. Are the elderly having more productive lives as a result or have we lost something with this development.